

# HIGHWAY 26 CORRIDOR STUDY UPDATE

Newsletter No. 1

December 1999

This is a publication of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to keep citizens informed about the Highway 26 corridor study.

## Public information meetings on Highway 26 Study alternatives to be held in January

**Information will be presented and public comments are requested**

Details about the Highway 26 Corridor Study alternatives, which include possible bypasses for the cities of Milton, Jefferson and Watertown, will be presented at three public information meetings in January. These meetings will be conducted on different evenings in the three cities. The same information on the entire Highway 26 corridor from Janesville at Interstate 90 to Highway 60 East, north of Watertown, including an estimate of each alternative's transportation and environmental impacts, will be presented at each meeting. Study alternatives include: adding two lanes to Highway 26 in those sections where this has not already been planned;

### **Schedule for the public information meetings:**

- **Monday, January 10, at Jefferson High School, 700 West Milwaukee Street, Jefferson**
- **Tuesday, January 11, at Northside Intermediate School, 159 Northside Drive, Milton**
- **Wednesday, January 19, at Riverside Middle School, 131 Hall Street, Watertown**

**Each meeting will be held from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the cafeteria.**

bypasses of the cities of Milton, Jefferson and Watertown; and accommodating future Highway 26 traffic growth on the existing corridors through the cities of Milton, Jefferson and Watertown.

The Department of Transportation (WisDOT)

encourages public comment on the alternatives. The meetings will be held in an open-house format to allow citizens the opportunity to review exhibits and discuss alternatives with the staff.

The Highway 26 Study will recommend how to meet the long term transportation needs of the Highway 26 corridor from Janesville at Interstate 90 to Highway 60 East north of Watertown.

In the next 30 years, traffic, a relatively high percentage of which is trucks, is expected to almost double on Highway 26. The study will conclude with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as required by federal and state law.

# Alternatives recommended for further study

Information about the Highway 26 Study alternatives will be available at the public information meetings scheduled in January 2000. These alternatives will be considered in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will be published in May 2000.

The number of alternatives has been reduced and remaining alternatives have been

modified since the public information meetings held last June. Many earlier alternatives are no longer under consideration because of a lack of public support and because they generally resulted in greater environmental consequences.

WisDOT and Federal Highway Administration are responsible for completing the EIS required by federal

and state law. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Interior, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the State Historical Preservation Office are participating in the review of alternatives.

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## 600 people attended June 1999 public information meetings

Nearly 600 people attended the three public information meetings held for the Highway 26 Study in the cities of Milton, Jefferson and Watertown last June. This was the first of four more groups of public meetings that the Department of Transportation will hold as part of its Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, study.

Public comments are an important factor in the study process. WisDOT received approximately 120 comment forms and letters after the June public meetings. In

addition to comment forms and letters, over 180 postcards were received indicating opposition to expanding Highway 26 through the city of Milton.

The same information was provided at all three meetings. There were displays showing various topics under study around the room. WisDOT staff and their consultant, Earth Tech, were available during the open house portion of the meeting to provide information on the alternatives and answer questions on an individual basis.

### Among the most frequent concerns and comments:

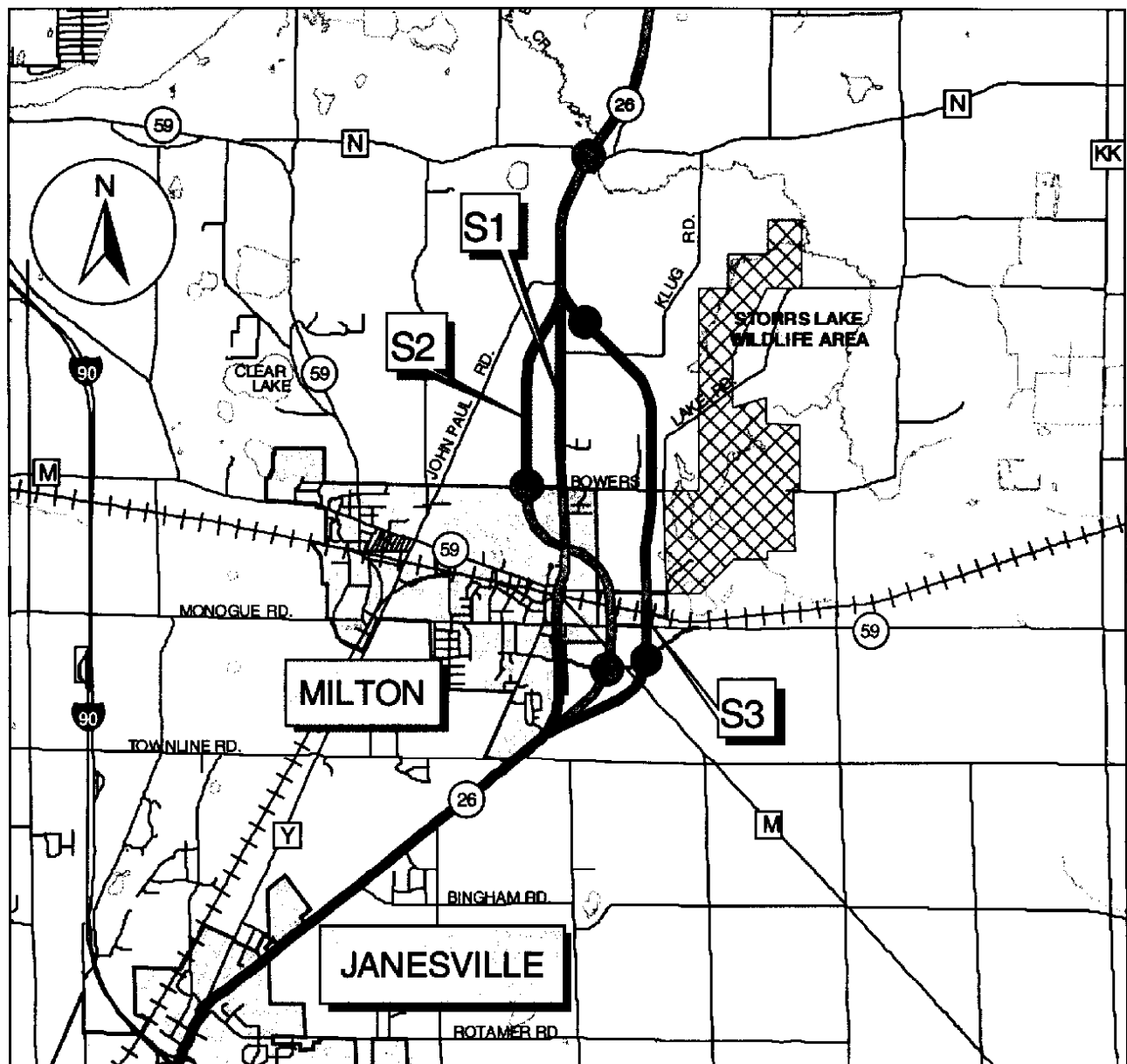
- The Milton House and other historically significant properties
- Safety at Highway N and Highway 26 in Rock County
- Loss of farmland
- Impacts to wetlands and wildlife habitat
- Loss of homes
- St. Coletta east of the city of Jefferson
- Access to the Watertown Hospital
- Existing Highway 16 bypass of the city of Watertown

## *Milton alternatives under consideration*

Three alternatives in the Milton area are being studied further and are shown below. Alternative S1 is the alternative through the city of Milton on existing

alignment. Alternative S2 is the near east alternative and was modified to better serve Milton's industrial park and Highway 59, and to provide a better interchange location on the north side of the city.

Alternative S3 is the alternative that was previously on the city's official map and was modified to provide a different interchange location on the south side of Milton.

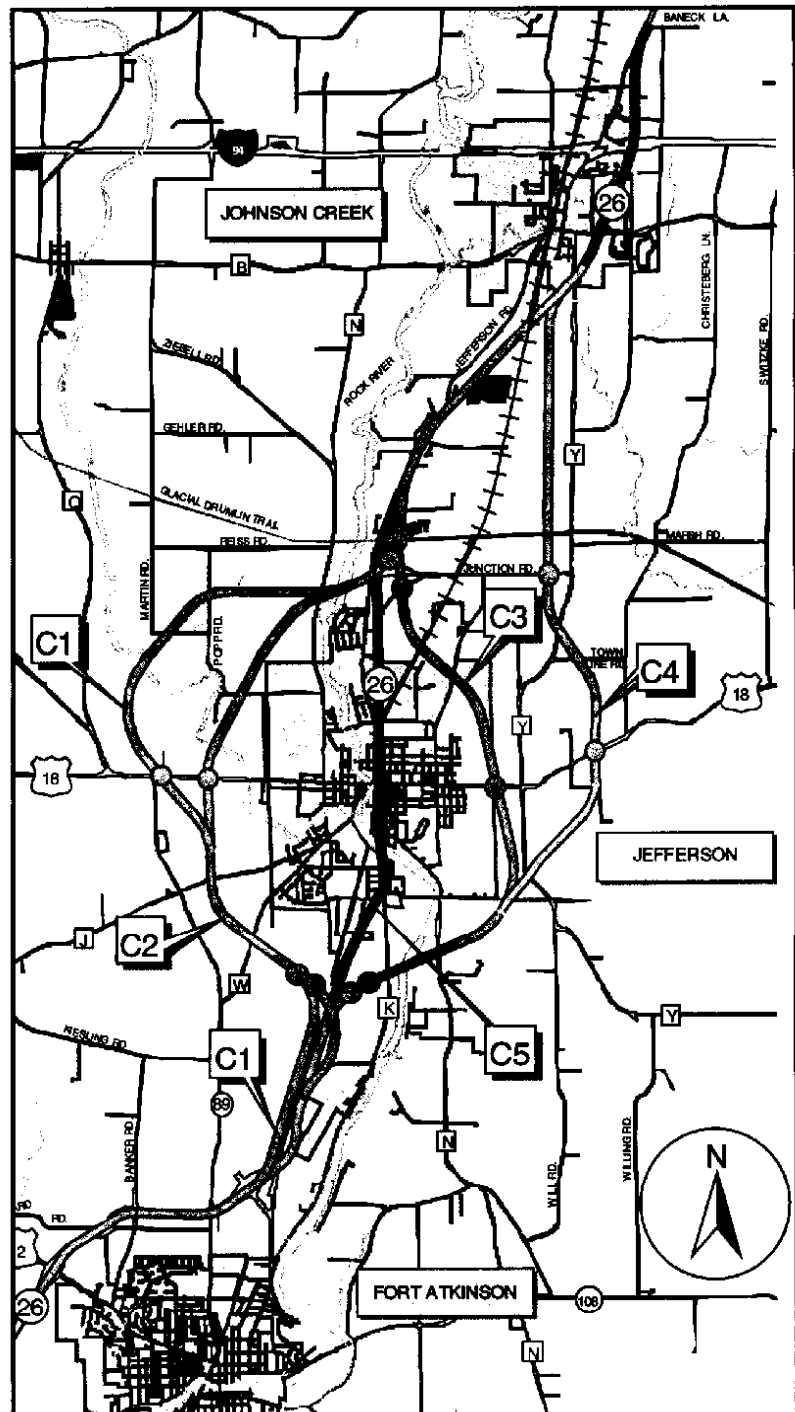


# Jefferson alternatives under consideration

**J**efferson area alternatives to be studied further include two options west of the city of Jefferson, Alternatives C1 and C2, two options east of the city, Alternative C3 and C4, and Alternative C5. Alternative C1 is now the most westerly alternative and was modified to revise the interchange location with Highway 18 so it is located west of the Crawfish River and the associated floodplains. Alternative C2 is the near westerly alternative and was modified to revise the interchange location with Highway 18 so it is located west of the existing Crawfish River bridge. Alternative C3 is the near east alternative. This alternative was refined to provide a partial cloverleaf interchange at Highway 18 with all ramp movements on the north side to allow St. Coletta residents to safely walk along the south side of Highway 18 without having to cross any intersections. Alternative C4 is the most easterly alternative and was modified to coincide with Alternative C3 until the southeast corner of Jefferson where it continues east and north. This alternative

avoids direct impacts to the St. Coletta facilities. Alternative C5 is the

alternative through Jefferson on existing alignment.



## Watertown alternatives under consideration

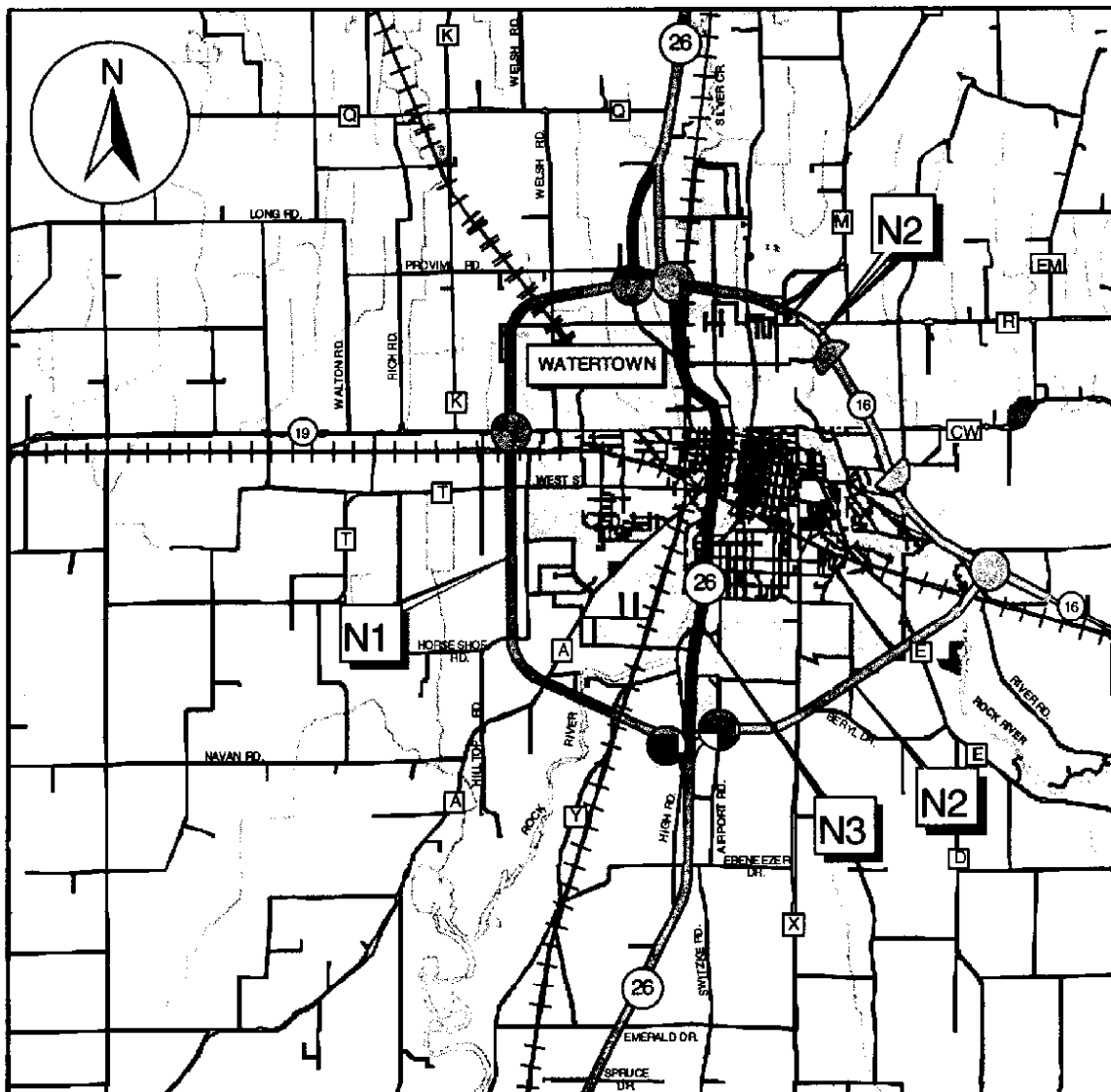
Three alternatives for the Watertown area. Alternatives N1, N2, and N3, are being studied further. These alternatives are basically the same alternatives that were presented at the June public information meetings, with

minor refinements.

Alternative N1 is the near west alternative and would provide a connection to Highways 16 and 19 with an interchange on the north side of the city of Watertown.

Alternative N2 is the near east alternative and would utilize the current

Highway 16 bypass, which would require that Highway 16 be improved to a freeway. Alternative N3 is the alternative through Watertown on existing alignment.



# Why is the Highway 26 study being done?

## Highway 26 is a Route of Statewide Importance:

- ◆ Links major Wisconsin communities, including the cities of Milton, Jefferson and Watertown to the Fox River Valley, Chicago and other points south of Wisconsin
- ◆ Located midway between the cities of Madison and Milwaukee
- ◆ Identified as a connector route on the Corridors 2020 Plan

## Local Interest in Study:

- ◆ Serves local economy and transportation needs
- ◆ The cities of Jefferson and Watertown have requested bypass studies
- ◆ The city of Milton's comprehensive plan recognizes the need for studying future expansion and bypass alternatives

## Growing Traffic:

- ◆ Traffic is increasing
- ◆ Truck traffic is relatively high
- ◆ Congestion on narrow roadways in older, historic areas is problematic
- ◆ Current or projected traffic exceeds threshold for consideration of a four-lane highway

## Preserving a Transportation Corridor:

- ◆ Future development may preclude reasonable bypass options
- ◆ Access limits are needed for a safe highway
- ◆ Coordinate land use planning and transportation planning

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## Highway 26 Corridor Study Schedule

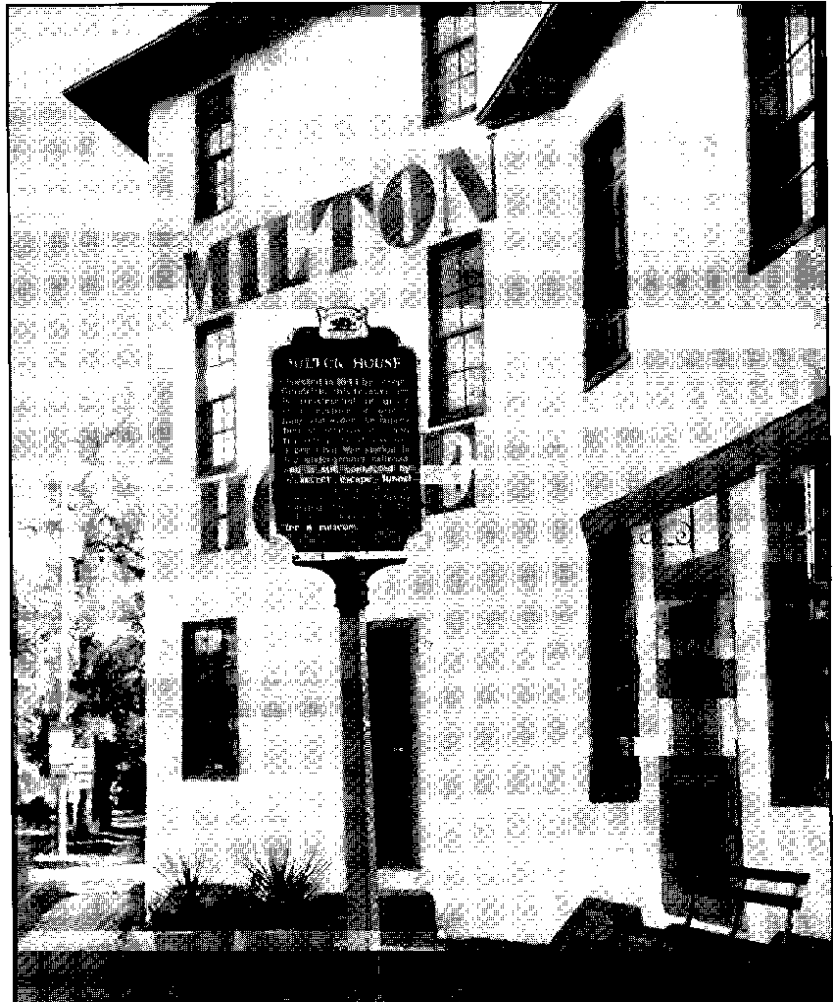
Study initiated	February 1999
Public information meetings on preliminary alternatives	June 1999
Public information meetings on detailed study alternatives	January 2000
Draft Environmental Impact Statement completed	May 2000
Public hearings	June 2000
Transportation Projects Commission meets	Summer 2000
Public information meetings on preferred alternatives	2001
Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision completed	2001
*Earliest possible construction start	2008

\*If the Transportation Projects Commission considers and accepts any projects in 2000, it is anticipated that construction would not occur until at least 2008, with right of way acquisition typically beginning no sooner than 2005. Sections of Highway 26 would likely be staged for improvement over a period of time.

# Historic preservation an important consideration

The National Preservation Act of 1966 requires that the Highway 26 Study take into account the impact of a federally-funded project on historical, architectural, cultural and archeological resources important to our heritage. To help ensure that this is done for the Highway 26 Study, archeologists and historians are gathering information and preparing reports on important archeological and architectural resources that could be affected by one of the alternatives being considered.

Persons with a concern for or knowledge about historical buildings and structures and archeological sites are encouraged to attend one of the January public information meetings or provide comments to WisDOT or their consulting firm, Earth Tech.



The Milton House is one of the premier historic properties in Wisconsin, having received National Historic Landmark status. The Highway 26 Study will not consider any alternative solutions for study that would directly affect the Milton House building.

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## Other projects along the Highway 26 corridor

Before the Highway 26 corridor study began in February 1999, a number of projects were already completed or planned for this section of Highway 26 due to a combination of congestion and safety problems. These projects

include: the Fort Atkinson bypass completed in 1995; two lanes added between the cities of Janesville and Milton last summer; two lanes will be added in the Johnson Creek area from Highway Y to Baneck Lane and the Interstate 94

interchange will be improved in 2001 and 2002; and a four-lane street will be built from Airport Road on the south side of the city of Watertown to Highway 19 (Main Street) in central Watertown.

# HIGHWAY 26 STUDY PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS IN JANUARY

*Please mark the upcoming public information meetings on your calendar! These meetings will be held from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the following locations:*

- ✓ *Monday, January 10, at Jefferson High School, 700 West Milwaukee Street, Jefferson*
- ✓ *Tuesday, January 11, at Northside Intermediate School, 159 Northside Drive, Milton*
- ✓ *Wednesday, January 19, at Riverside Middle School, 131 Hall Street, Watertown*

The schools are wheelchair accessible. Persons requiring the assistance of a sign language interpreter may contact Kimberly Johnson through the Wisconsin Telecommunication Relay System (1-800-WI-Relay) no later than three working days prior to the meeting.

## QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the individuals below. If you would like your name added to the mailing list for future announcements or if you would like your name removed from the mailing list, contact Kim Johnson.

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